

# AUSTRALIAN BIOGRAPHY

A series that profiles some of the most extraordinary Australians of our time



**Charles 'Bud' Tingwell**

1923-2009

Actor & Director

This program is an episode of **Australian Biography** Series 9 produced under the National Interest Program of Film Australia. This well-established series profiles some of the most extraordinary Australians of our time. Many have had a major impact on the nation's cultural, political and social life. All are remarkable and inspiring people who have reached a stage in their lives where they can look back and reflect. Through revealing in-depth interviews, they share their stories—of beginnings and challenges, landmarks and turning points. In so doing, they provide us with an invaluable archival record and a unique perspective on the roads we, as a country, have travelled.

**Australian Biography: Charles 'Bud' Tingwell**

**Director/producer** Rod Freedman

**Executive producer** Mark Hamlyn

**Duration** 26 minutes **Year** 2003

Study guide prepared by Roger Stitson © NFSA

Also in Series 9: Betty Churcher, Marjorie Jackson-Nelson, Thomas Keneally, Bill Mollison, Bernard Smith, Joan Winch

## A FILM AUSTRALIA NATIONAL INTEREST PROGRAM

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## SYNOPSIS

Charles "Bud" Tingwell was one of Australia's best loved actors.

His career began in radio - as the youngest announcer in Australia - after winning a role in a serial with Jack Davey. He moved into movies after World War Two, playing the lead in only his second feature. By the age of 30, he was in Hollywood. But his career really took off when he went to London, where he "accidentally got trapped" for 16 years. The television series **Emergency Ward 10**, in which he starred, was watched live by half the UK population.

Bud returned to Australia in 1972. As an actor and sometimes director and producer, he was part of some of Australia's favourite programs including TV series such as **Homicide**, **The Sullivans** and **The Flying Doctors** and miniseries such as **Power Without Glory** and **All the Rivers Run**, in addition to films like **Breaker Morant**.

In this interview, Bud reveals his attitude to celebrity. He recalls growing up beachside at Coogee in Sydney and his changing family circumstances - how his father, retrenched from his job, still pretended to go to work everyday...and then won the lottery. He remembers his air force service, flying Spitfires, and the extraordinary calm he felt in the face of death. He talks of his marriage to Audrey and how his work helped him cope with her death, with roles in **The Castle** and **Innocence** leading to a career resurgence.

Bud received the prestigious Gold Logie Hall of Fame award and was awarded an AM (Member of the Order of Australia) for his contribution to the performing arts as an actor, director, producer, and to the community. With over 140 credits to his name, he was described by the Prime Minister as an Australian legend.

When this interview was conducted, Bud was 80, and busier than ever.

## CURRICULUM LINKS

This program will have interest and relevance for teachers and students at middle to senior secondary and tertiary levels. Curriculum links include English, Drama, Media Studies, SOSE/HSIE and Personal Development.

## AFTER WATCHING

What do you recall from viewing the program?

- How did Charles Tingwell receive his lifelong nickname of 'Bud'?
- What did Bud's father continue to do after he was dismissed from his job, and why?
- When Bud's father won the lottery, how was the money spent?
- What was the title of the radio serial in which Bud first appeared, and how did he get the role?
- What was Bud's first job after leaving school?
- What dangerous situation did Bud experience in the Royal Australian Air Force during World War Two, and how did he react to it?
- Where was Bud when he bought an engagement ring for Audrey?
- Why did Audrey have to resign from her job as an air hostess?
- What was the title, and year of release, of Bud's first film?
- What was Bud's attitude towards Hollywood stardom?
- When Bud went to England to finish filming **The Shiralee**, how long did he remain there?
- What was the title of the famous English TV drama in which Bud starred?
- Why wouldn't Bud have his name printed in the telephone book?
- Why did Bud and his family return to Australia?
- What was the TV drama in which Bud was offered a part on arriving back in Australia, and what was the name of its production company?
- Bud directed episodes of which popular Australian TV serial?
- Why didn't Bud mind playing roles other than the lead in films and TV programs?
- Why did Bud stop making films and TV programs for some time?
- What was so important to Bud about his role in **The Castle**?
- After many years, what major task did Bud finally agree to, but what remained his preference?

## RADIO

The characteristic that distinguishes radio broadcasting from other forms of communication media is that it relies solely on sound—and silence. In terms of radio plays, the audience can only make sense of a story from what they are permitted to hear; from that point on, each listener's imagination then takes over, where you begin to 'see' and 'feel' with your mind's eye the events being unfolded, the characters who are involved and the settings portrayed. In the 1920s, when radio first extended to a mass audience, this means of storytelling was previously unknown, and therefore had to be invented in much the same way as the new form of storytelling on film had to be developed when cinema was invented in 1896.

■ The year of Bud Tingwell's birth, 1923, was very important in the history of the development of the Australian radio broadcasting industry. What took place in 1923, and what was the significant role played by Australia's newly appointed Postmaster-General, William Gibson?

■ In 1930 it's believed that the first Australian plays specially written for radio were broadcast. They rapidly became a very popular form of entertainment. Discuss in class the characteristics and requirements of radio plays in comparison to other forms of storytelling, such as novels and short stories, stage plays and films. Then draw up a grid table, with storytelling forms arranged in columns along the top, and a list of their characteristics in rows down the left side of the grid.

■ We are told in the program that one of Bud Tingwell's childhood friends was Owen Weingott. Research and write a 500-word biography of Owen Weingott, describing his importance and relevance to theatre drama in Australia.

■ Before the television era began, 'soap operas' were already a particular type of popular radio drama. Find out what kinds of stories they were, the audience they catered to, and why they were called soap operas. During your research, list the titles of three Australian radio soaps that were broadcast between the 1930s and 1950s, and briefly outline what each one was about. Plan and write an imagined conversation between two 'typical' members of the listening audience, who discuss their favourite soap operas. Students may even wish to act these out to the class.

■ Bud Tingwell's radio debut came when he was offered a role in a children's radio serial starring Jack Davey. Who was Jack Davey? What is his importance to the history of Australian radio popular entertainment? One section of the class may each plan and arrange their own biographies of Davey in the form of a magazine article. In the program Bud Tingwell also refers to other important figures he

was associated with in Australian radio, such as the Americans Bob Dyer and Grace Gibson. Another group in the class may each research and write magazine biographies about Dyer, while the remainder concentrate on Gibson. (Students with internet web page production facilities may wish to build a web magazine site rather than produce a hard-copy magazine item.)

- Children's radio serials were immensely popular in Australia until the introduction of television in 1956. Find out what effect television had on radio drama and radio voice actors in the years following 1956. As a class, compile a list of radio serials that Australian children enjoyed between the 1930s and 1950s. Explain why some serials are also referred to as 'cliffhangers'. Each student should research one of the listed serials, then provide the class with a short talk, describing what they've found out about it; this may include a general plot, setting and character description, information about listener fan groups and competitions, promotional tours, public appearances by actors and maybe even, if available, a recorded sample of the serial, on audio cassette or CD (some episodes of old radio serials are commercially available; some excerpts may also be heard on internet sites).

- Working in small groups, write and produce some short cliffhanger episodes for a radio serial. You could record each episode either onto audio cassette for tape playback, or, if you have the appropriate hardware and software, you could record directly to computer sound file on hard disc or CD for the internet or intranet. Here is a list of some possible cliffhanger serial titles, and their genres or story types:

- The Adventures of Rip Roar, Ace Pilot (action-adventure, set anywhere, any time after the invention of the aeroplane; could also be a futuristic science-fiction outerspace story)
- Lucy of Lucien Grammar (adventure, comedy, mystery, romance, involving Lucy and her school friends, set in a large coastal town)
- ASIO Versus the Purple Terror (spy thriller, where the heroes and heroines of Australia's spy organisation fight a masked villain intent on taking over the world with mind-control equipment)
- Rock Valley Riders (Australian outback rural adventure-drama about a group of country-and-western musicians)
- Dark Street Detective Agency (big-city private detective suspense mystery)

General suggestions: script drafting and script page layout should be prepared. Voice actors should carry out one or more practice runs through each script prior to a recording session (this is a good way to test in advance whether or not the spoken dialogue needs to be altered), and they should be familiar with microphone placement and technique. Sound testing should take place before a recording session begins—such elements as background noise will need to be sound-proofed. If sound effects and mood or background music are required, these will need to be prepared in advance—students involved in this part of the production will also need to practise the script with the actors, and a director will be needed to 'cue' the actors and sound effects technicians.

Keep a regularly updated journal of your radio serial writing and production ideas and experiences, referring to it in group discussions; this is a very useful way to solve problems, offer new ideas and to prevent previous difficulties from being repeated. Don't be surprised if all or a part of any recording session has to be repeated for a range of reasons—even professionals make mistakes!

## INTERLUDE: WORLD WAR TWO

- After World War Two broke out, Bud Tingwell joined the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF), and was trained as a pilot via the Empire Air Training Scheme. Research and describe the history, purpose, activities and importance of the scheme.

- After his training, Bud flew with the Royal Air Force (RAF) 680 Squadron as a photographic reconnaissance pilot. Present a page of information about photo reconnaissance and the 680 Squadron. Include pictures (photographs or drawings) of the kinds of aircraft that were flown: Spitfires and Mosquitoes.

## FILM

During the first half of the 20th century the Australian feature filmmaking industry constantly struggled to survive. In particular, very few Australian films were produced in the years following World War Two (1939-1945), until new Federal Government funding initiatives in the 1970s were introduced. Bud Tingwell, though, had roles in Australian movies from 1946 onwards, and in those years, and into the 1950s, he was associated with a number of heroic people who were vitally important in keeping Australian film production alive, with few resources and very little finance.

- In small groups, select from the following list of Australian film production companies and filmmakers from the post-war period and the 1950s: Cinesound Productions and Ken G. Hall, Lee Robinson and Chips Rafferty, Cecil Holmes, Charles Chauvel and T. O. (Tom) McCreadie. Construct a wall poster of text and pictorials (such as film stills and promotional advertising) describing and illustrating their place in the Australian film industry.

- Describe the roles Bud Tingwell played in the following films: **Bitter Springs** (1950), **Captain Thunderbolt** (1953), **King of the Coral Sea** (1954). The last-named film launched the big-screen career of which other famous Australian actor? Write a short biography of this actor's Hollywood film and television career.

- While in England Bud Tingwell appeared in four feature films between 1961 and 1964 based on novels by Agatha Christie, in which he played Inspector Craddock. What were the titles of the films? View one of them (available on video) and write your own scene to be played out between Miss Marple and Inspector Craddock (and perhaps a murder suspect). With class members, act out the scene in the classroom.

- Research and explain in writing why the Australian film industry operated under extreme difficulties until the 1970s. How did most Australian feature filmmakers earn their living during those years? (include a discussion of the importance of the Commonwealth Department of Information Film Division, later renamed the Commonwealth Film Unit, as a provider of employment and training for Australian filmmakers). What important measures took place in the 1970s to revitalise the Australian film industry, and why?

- From the 1970s onwards, Bud Tingwell has acted in many Australian films. In 1979 he played a role that is considered to be 'playing against type', in **Money Movers**, directed by Bruce Beresford. View the video of the film and explain in what way Bud is playing against type, in comparison to his roles in other films.

- Write an essay on the following topic: 'The types of roles actors play in films generally change as they age. Discuss in relation to Bud Tingwell'. In preparation for writing the essay, view **The Craic** (1999) and **Innocence** (2000), or any more recent films available on video or DVD in which Bud appears.

- Imagine you have been asked to write a 500-word movie review

of **The Castle** for a magazine, a student newspaper or a website. Plan and write the review and present it in the appropriate format. If possible, illustrate it with at least one film still.

There are a few points to consider when reviewing a film: avoid a lengthy plot description; briefly describe what kind of story it is (comedy, science fiction etc), the setting and the main characters; appraise the film's style and direction, the script and the acting; above all, don't give away major plot surprises or the ending. For more ideas on film reviewing, read magazine and newspaper examples and view programs such as **The Movie Show** on SBS TV.

## TELEVISION

The year 1956 marked the beginning of a new era in mass media communications, news and entertainment, with the introduction of television in Australia. Instead of being there to take part in it, though, Bud Tingwell says of this time that in 1956 he 'accidentally got trapped in London', where, ironically, he soon became a very famous face on British television.

- Research and write 400 words on the introduction of television to Australia, include information on Federal Government legislation, and reasons as to why the year of 1956 was deliberately chosen.
- What was the impact of television on the Australian people in the first few years after its introduction, in terms of radio listening and filmgoing? Did it affect book reading and library attendances? Were school teachers concerned about the effects of television viewing on their students? Find out how the radio and cinema industries responded to television.
- In the program Bud speaks about the price of television fame, where being an instantly recognised figure could bring trouble. Imagine you are a well-known television actor: you are keeping a personal daily diary of the downside of fame. Write the diary entries.
- Hector Crawford was a very important figure in the development of Australian television drama productions. Plan and produce a magazine item, large wall poster or web page about Crawford and his television production organisation.
- Working with other members of the class, write and perform a short drama script in which a police detective is questioning a suspicious character in the interview room of a police station. If your class has access to a video camera you may wish to film the scene: in this case your script should contain instructions about the use of camera shots and sound effects.

## ARTS AND CULTURAL ORGANISATIONS

Bud Tingwell has been associated with many Australian arts and cultural organisations during his career as actor, writer, producer and director. The following class activity reflects this involvement.

- Form small groups and select one of the following organisations. Each member of the group is to research and report to the rest of the class on an aspect of their chosen organisation's activities, purpose and place in the Australian community. Choose from:
  - Australian Children's Television Foundation ([www.actf.com.au](http://www.actf.com.au))
  - Australian Film Commission ([www.afc.gov.au](http://www.afc.gov.au))
  - Australian Film Institute, including the AFI's Raymond Longford Award ([www.afi.org.au](http://www.afi.org.au))
  - Australian Screen Directors Association ([www.asdafilm.org.au](http://www.asdafilm.org.au))
  - Film Australia ([www.filmaust.com.au](http://www.filmaust.com.au))
  - Melbourne Theatre Company ([www.mtc.com.au](http://www.mtc.com.au))
  - ScreenSound Australia ([www.screensound.gov.au](http://www.screensound.gov.au))
  - Victorian College of the Arts, Film and TV School

([www.vca.unimelb.edu.au](http://www.vca.unimelb.edu.au))

- Victorian Drama League (<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~vicdrama>)

## REFERENCES AND FURTHER RESOURCES

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- Filmpapers—Film reviews and critiques student resource [www.filmpapers.com](http://www.filmpapers.com)
- History of Australian Television - <http://televisionau.com/>
- NFSA—Screen and sound archive resources <http://www.nfsa.gov.au/collection/search-collection/>
- Oz Film: Post-War Australian Film and Television [www.mcc.murdoch.edu.au/ReadingRoom/film/AFTV.html](http://www.mcc.murdoch.edu.au/ReadingRoom/film/AFTV.html)
- Radio drama resources and links <https://dramateachersnetwork.wordpress.com/tag/radio-plays/>